

Regular Meeting
March 6, 2006

The Chowan County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, March 6, 2006 at 9:00 am in the Panel Room of the 1767 Courthouse.

Present: Jimmy Alligood, Louis Belfield, Ralph Cole, Jerry Downum, Bill Gardner, Wayne Goodwin, Harry Lee Winslow.

Chairman Wayne Goodwin called the meeting to order and Commissioner Belfield presented the invocation.

Consent Agenda

By motion of Commissioner Gardner, the Consent Agenda, including the February minutes and the following budget amendments and tax reliefs, was approved.

Ayes 7

No 0

Budget Amendments

4731 Soil Conservation	increase	\$1263	interim coordinator
4270 E911	increase	\$168,824	software upgrade for
			Central Communications
4311 Sheriff	increase	\$59,963	Gov's Highway Safety grant
4710 Solid Waste	increase	\$45,644	Scrap Tire grant

Tax Reliefs

CC Bean	\$149.84	vehicle sold
DM Colon	\$229.58	military in Florida
Food Equipment Warehouse	\$184.88	wrong pricing information
WB Gardner	\$125.45	vehicle sold
AW Hare	\$110.98	vehicle totaled
VL Lawrence	\$102.89	vehicle turned in

Public Hearing – Library Expansion/USDA Loan Offer

The regular meeting was recessed and a Public Hearing declared to receive comment on the need for expansion of the Shepard-Pruden Library, and the proposed financing by USDA. The USDA has offered a loan of \$1.8 million at an interest rate of 4.5% for thirty years.

County Manager Cliff Copeland stated that the Library project was delayed due to the recovery needs following Hurricane Isabel. The Library Board, the Board of Commissioners, the neighboring Cupola House Association, other organizations and citizens have been involved in the plan that is proposed.

Librarian Rosalie Miller noted that the Library building is more than forty years old and the service needs have changed. The growth the County is calculated at 7.6% every ten years. The Shepard-Pruden Library currently has more than 7600 patrons with library

privileges. More than 3000 patrons visit monthly. The need for additional computer stations, internet access, and additional book shelving will be addressed in the expansion. A climate controlled room for sensitive documents, a North Carolina Room to house numerous books and documents of local information, and a Children's Room will also be included in the expansion. The expansion will also make the Library ADA accessible, which it is not as of now.

County Attorney Peter Rascoe reported that reviews by the Town of Edenton are complete, approval from the State Historic Preservation Office has been received, and the Environmental Review found no negative impact to the Cupola House property.

The project will be resubmitted to the Edenton Historical Commission since the original permit expired when the project was delayed.

Mr. Rascoe also stated that the County will present evidence to the USDA that adequate casualty and property insurance is in place.

Architect Jerry Traub presented a sketch plan for examination and stated that the State Historic Properties Office approval was received last week.

Chairman Goodwin opened the floor for public comment.

Lee Lolkama spoke saying that she and her husband moved to Edenton five years ago and she was impressed with the offerings at the Library. She works there now and enjoys seeing the growth at the Library.

Richard Bunch, Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce, stated that he appreciates the Board of Commissioners taking action to improve the assets of the County Library, which is a very important asset to the community.

Library Board of Trustees Member Anne Rowe thanked the Board of Commissioners for their support of the Library and stated that she is very excited about this important project for the County.

Jo Ann Lesiewicz stated that she is new to Chowan County and appreciates the support of the Library, which is "the heart and soul of the community where all walks of life are served".

With no further comments offered, the Public Hearing was closed and the regular meeting reconvened.

By motion of Commissioner Belfield, the Board of Commissioners accepted the USDA loan offer of \$1.8 million at a rate of 4.5% interest for thirty years.

Ayes 7

No 0

Planning/Inspections Report

Planner Elizabeth Bryant reminded the Board of the joint meeting with the County Planning Board for Tuesday, March 21 at 6:00pm in the Panel Room.

Zoning consultants will present information at that time.

Mrs. Bryant also discussed the idea of farmland preservation, also known as voluntary agricultural districts, whereby property rights are purchased and the farming operations continue on the property. She noted that the County should determine if the effort is to protect farming production and/or to preserve the rural atmosphere, which might determine methods to do so. Open spaces can be protected in subdivision ordinance and zoning ordinance regulations.

County Extension Chairman Mike Williams reported that a program in Randolph County has ten-year terms of voluntary agricultural districts.

Commissioner Winslow noted tax incentives and the sale of timber playing a part of the revenues involved in such programs.

Mr. Williams estimated that farmed acreage has decreased in Chowan County by about five percent in the last ten years.

This item will be on the agenda for the March 21 meeting when Mrs. Bryant will report on her conversation with representatives from Currituck County where such a program is beginning.

Lease Purchase for County Vehicles

Finance Officer Lisa Jones presented a summary of bids received for lease purchase financing for vehicles for the Sheriff's Department, the Senior Center, Animal Control and an ambulance and related equipment for EMS.

Wachovia Bank	3.70%
RBC Centura	3.73%
BB&T	3.83%
Bank of America	4.34226%
Southern Bank	4.40%
Gateway Bank	no bid

By motion of Commissioner Downum, the low bidder, Wachovia Bank, was awarded the lease purchase contract.

Ayes 7

No 0

Mosquito Control Program Designated Agent

By motion of Commissioner Cole, a resolution was passed designating County Manager Cliff Copeland as the County's official to sign and execute all documents necessary in connection with requests made to the Division of Environmental Health, for aid in the control of mosquitoes program.

Ayes 7

No 0

Verizon Wireless Lease Proposal

County Attorney Peter Rascoe presented a proposed contract between Chowan County and Verizon Wireless for space on the County's tower recently located on Highway 32. The tower was constructed with funds appropriated to the County through a Homeland Security grant to provide improved communications between public safety agencies in Chowan County. It was noted that dependable cell phone coverage is a very important part of providing public safety, both by the agencies and individual useage. Billy Rose and Kathy Faulkner, representing Verizon Wireless, outlined the company's intention to provide cellular phone coverage in areas presently underserved in the County. Verizon will pay all expenses to locate its antennas on the County's tower and agree to the five-year contract, with a first-year rental of \$19,800.

Areas in the County with especially poor cell phone coverage include Arrowhead Beach and the Yeopim area.

Commissioner Belfield made a motion that the County approve the lease as presented.

Ayes 7

No 0

Animal Control Ordinance Revision

Mr. Rascoe and Animal Control Supervisor Mary Bass presented a proposed revision of the County's Animal Control Ordinance. Revisions proposed include penalties for the first, second and third offense for public nuisance animals; and actions for potentially dangerous dogs, dangerous and vicious animals. Also included in the revision are changes in definitions to conform to the State Statutes for these public nuisance, potentially dangerous, dangerous and vicious animals designations. Also included, is a regulation on the possession of exotic animals, which will ban such animals as pets in the County, except as specifically permitted.

The animal tax, which is no longer levied in Chowan County, was removed from the Ordinance, as well as the Animal Control Supervisor's responsibility to enforce.

Commissioner Belfield made a motion that the Animal Control Ordinance be amended to reflect the proposed changes.

Ayes 7

No 0

Mr. Copeland announced that a meeting of the Commissioners in the three counties owning the Tri-County Shelter, Chowan, Gates and Perquimans, will be scheduled in the spring, when the Commissioners will discuss long range plans for the Shelter.

In response to question, Mrs. Bass stated that the Shelter plans to offer a microchip program for animals this year. This identification program is gaining national attention and is very successful.

Schedule Public Hearing - Rural Operating Assistance Program

Commissioner Downum moved that the County schedule a Public Hearing for the April 3 meeting at 6:00pm to receive comment on the proposed use for the Rural Operating Assistance Program allocation.

Ayes 7

No 0

Schedule Public Hearing – Abandonment of Portion of SR 1135 Bell Drive

Commissioner Alligood made a motion that the Commissioners conduct a public hearing at the April 3 meeting at 6:00pm to receive comment on the proposed abandonment of .04 mile of Bell Drive.

Ayes 7

No 0

Schedule Meeting of the Board of Equalization and Review

Commissioner Cole made a motion that the Commissioners hold a meeting of the Board of Equalization and Review at 7:00pm at the April 3 meeting.

Ayes 7

No 0

Annual Monitoring for Chowan DSS Medical Assistance Department

DSS Director Ben Rose presented the results of the recent annual monitoring of the Medical Assistance Division of the Chowan DSS, and was pleased to announce a perfect 100% score in all areas reviewed, including denied cases, withdrawn cases, appeal reversals, discouragement issues, and processing times. Angela Harris is the Supervisor of the Unit and the other employees are Desiree Blanchard, Cherie Blount, Joyce Battle, Pam Jones, Peggy Copeland, Tina Broome, Patricia Holley, Cheryl White, and Kathy Remy.

He also announced that the WorkFirst Unit scored as one of the top five in the State in the participation rate for January.

Request for Positions

Mr. Rose presented information that the Human Services Committee reviewed and recommended on a request for an additional position in the Child Protective Services Unit. Mr. Rose reported that in the budget year of 2004-05, Chowan DSS investigated 55 cases. In the first six months of the 2005-06 year, 50 cases were investigated. The accepted report rate for February 2006 was double that of January 2006.

Chowan County now has a record number of children in foster care – 20. Because there are no foster homes in Chowan County, these 20 children are scattered across the state. Mr. Rose requested that the Board authorize an additional Social Worker position for Child Protective Services. This new position would be specialized and provide services to only foster children, allowing investigators more time for current investigations and treatment cases, which are at record levels. This new employee would perform recruitment of foster homes and provide the required training and licensing for these homes. This employee would work with the hospital and the school system in suspected neglect and abuse cases.

In earlier reorganization of the department, some job responsibilities for Medicaid transportation clients and interviewer (Income Maintenance worker) were combined, which did not work out, due to availability requirements. Mr. Rose requested a position to perform the Medicaid transportation duties and clerical duties in the Medicaid Services Unit. He also requested permission to designate the senior Income Maintenance Worker as lead worker to assist in administrative review and other administrative and worker support duties.

Due to reorganizations in the department, no additional money will be required in this year's budget.

Commissioner Downum moved that the County authorize the two positions, one in Child Services and the second in the Medicaid Income Maintenance unit.

Ayes 7

No 0

Commissioner Gardner introduced Parks and Recreation Department Director Robbie Laughton, who reported that grants to the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and to the Coastal Area Management Act Fund have been submitted for assistance to develop the Red Banks Farm proposed athletic complex. These grant requests included ballfields, playground space, parking spaces, a bike trail, picnic areas and boardwalks. A CAMA grant application was also submitted for assistance to develop a small neighborhood park access on property acquired from FEMA on the waterfront in Cape Colony. This is

property that was flooded in Hurricane Isabel where the owners sold the property to FEMA and relocated.

He also announced that the Recreation Department continues to prepare for the Eastern Athletic Regional Basketball Association tournament this weekend in Chowan County. This will be the first time that Chowan County has hosted the 85-team association of 7-18 year old players and their families.

Public Comment

Jim Leggett stated that he appreciated the library services available in Chowan County and believed the expansion to be a needed and justified expense. He noted the good customer service provided at the library.

Chairman Goodwin reported that he attended a meeting of the NC Association of County Commissioners Medicaid Committee and heard the proposal that the counties negotiate with the State for the State to assume Medicaid costs. He heard the presentation whereby the counties would give up a one-cent sales tax for the State to take the Medicaid burden. Information was presented where Chowan County would gain \$700,000-\$800,000 benefit in such a deal. Of course, some of the wealthier counties or a county with a low Medicaid roll may not see a gain as the counties with high Medicaid costs and/or big sales tax revenue, though some of the larger counties did support the compromise since it would help get Medicaid off the counties. Chairman Goodwin said he supported the proposal, but it did not pass the vote of the NCACC Committee. The NCACC staff continues to work with the legislative committees to determine an acceptable plan.

Manager's Report

Mr. Copeland congratulated Chairman Goodwin and Commissioners Belfield and Alligood in that they have no opposition in the primary or the general election for their seats on the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Copeland said that he believes this action can be taken as a vote of confidence in the work of the Commissioners and County staff.

A meeting of the Education Committee, Chairman Goodwin and Commissioners Belfield and Cole, has been scheduled with the Board of Education committee members for March 23. A long range plan will be discussed at this meeting.

A meeting with the Clean Water Management Trust Fund has been scheduled to determine if funds might be available to assist in the proposed sewer project.

Construction is scheduled to begin on the Sandy Point project in April and May.

The Public Safety Committee reviewed the proposed plans for the Law Enforcement Center last month and preliminary work continues.

The meeting was adjourned.

Nancy B. Morgan, County Clerk

